

THE ROCK: SAVED TO SERVE

Ministry Plan for July 2020 to June 2021

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10 (NIV).

THE BIG PICTURE

The mission of the Rock is to be a joyful and supportive group of people in Seward, Nebraska, that is continually reaching out to connect people to Jesus Christ and to each other. Our overall vision is to be a group of people joined together by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and striving for new connections through **open gatherings, conversations, service in the community, and mission beyond borders**. We are guided by the following “ACCESS” values:

Accepting: As Christians living under grace, we are accepting of all who seek a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our activities are conducted in an orderly way, but we will not allow fear of failure to delay action. We relax and delight in the fact that God works through our efforts.

Connecting: We establish connections with those who desire to follow Jesus Christ and those who are open to faith conversations. We create open and welcoming environments in which individuals can be honest and accountable. We gather in small groups and large groups for support, teaching, conversation, and celebration. We will connect with people where they are; not where we think they should be.

Caring: We make connections with those around us by caring for their spiritual, physical, and emotional needs.

Equipping: We teach the Word to equip each other for lives of service and outreach and to use faithfully the spiritual and monetary gifts God has given to us.

Seeking: We seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance (as discerned and tested through prayer, Bible study, and the counsel of fellow Christians) so that we can join God where He is working rather than follow our own plans. We find truth in the Bible. It reveals God’s plan of eternal salvation and is relevant for daily living.

Sending: We are active participants in our community, using our unique individual and collective gifts to serve in a variety of ways. We encourage more action and fewer meetings. We teach and equip people to grab opportunities to share and serve for Jesus’ sake, even if it means they will be absent from our gatherings. We send them with our blessing for service in the community, at work, and at play.

CONNECTIONS

We will follow where the Spirit leads in serving the people He brings to us. We will focus on serving the neighbors and people we meet each day in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and other spheres of influence. The largest demographic group located in the City of Seward and within a 5-mile radius of Seward is families with children. As a result, these are the people we are most likely to run into on a daily basis. Though many of them grew up connected to a church, many now do not have a meaningful connection to a community of believers. The families in our community generally exhibit the following characteristics:

- (1) Young families are beginning their lives together and having children. Having grown up with omnipresent telecommunications, they revel in multitasking lifestyles that allow them to bounce between cell phones and iPads, laptops, and video games. They are into athletics and exercise, whether it's playing a pick-up basketball or volleyball game or working out by lifting weights or taking a yoga class. They have active social lives, going to bars, theaters, and movies. They describe themselves as risk-takers who like to try new things. Religion does not play a significant role in their lives. They are more than twice as likely as other groups to use the Internet and/or social media for almost any purpose imaginable; from entertainment, to finding a car, looking for a job, shopping, banking, etc.
- (2) Established families with older children have busy, child-centered lives and spend a lot of time in their cars ferrying their children to activities and heading off for weekend excursions to museums, zoos, or aquariums. Usually they are activities-crazy families who join leagues to play sports, participate in the performing arts, and take time to fish, hunt, and boat. They still travel as a family. When parents need a date night, they'll head to a casual dining restaurant, movie or sports event. Families with grown children also tend to be child-centered with an emphasis on relationships with children and grandchildren.

The people in our community are busy. There is often no time and no pressing reason to think about Jesus. While balancing full work schedules, they live full lives with lots of activities. Sooner or later, however, everyone will experience events that shake up the status quo and change everything. Here are just a few examples:

- *A couple welcomes home their first child and realizes they are responsible for another life.
- *A parent/grandparent passes away and they come face to face with their own mortality.
- *A child graduates from college but can't find a job or afford to leave home to live on his own.
- *A tornado or a fire destroys all of the family's belongings.
- *A sudden accident takes a life or causes disabling injuries.
- *Layoffs or job loss lead to financial struggles.
- *Divorce or broken relationships split up the family.
- *A family member suffers from depression or addiction.
- *A family member has a health scare or finds out he or she has cancer.
- *A son or daughter is bullied and suicidal.
- *A teenage pregnancy changes the family.
- *A couple struggles with infertility.

These events cause us to realize we're not in control. Everything we identify with and rely upon and strive for can be messed up in an instant. The muck of this sinful world invades every family and replaces happiness and hope with uncertainty and despair. What do you do then?

The Rock can help. We have been entrusted to share the Good News that Jesus died to save us from our sins and to redeem everything. Everything that is old and messed up will be made new and perfect and it isn't based on anything we do. It's a free gift given to us even though we don't deserve it.

How do we share this Good News with the people around us? The answer is pretty simple, but it may not be what you are expecting. It's not a step-by-step evangelism program or a plan to send the Pastor out knocking on doors. **The answer is we serve.** As disciples and followers of Jesus, we stay connected to Him and then we do what He leads us to do. We do the good works God prepared in advance for us in the places we live and work every day. We help, we listen, we have conversations and we relax—knowing that it is the Spirit that does all the heavy lifting and brings people to faith.

The overall goal is to be a community of sinners-made-saints who serve the people around us as agenda-less friends always watching for where the Holy Spirit is working. It means living our faith 24/7 and not just putting in time on Sunday mornings. It means being a community of servants, supporting each other in our struggles, pointing each other to Jesus, and reminding each other that God is real, and His promises are true.

THE FOCUS AREAS

It's not our plan. We can't make people believe in Jesus and we can't make a plan that will make people come to the Rock or believe in Jesus. It's the Holy Spirit that does all of that. Our role as a forever family is to see where God is already working and do the good works He prepared for us to do as part of His plan. The Rock is dedicated to helping all of us join in His mission and will focus its efforts in the following areas:

- (1) **Worship**: We will gather on Sunday mornings to build relationships with each other, support each other and connect to Jesus through baptism, the Lord's Supper and hearing His Word. We will celebrate God's goodness and sing praise to God. We will receive training and encouragement to be servants to the people we have contact with during the week. Our gatherings will continue to be casual and welcoming with opportunities for adults and children to participate.
- (2) **Missional Communities**: We will encourage small groups of people with common interests to join together in for support, insight, and accountability. They will meet regularly and share stories of recognizing Jesus at work and joining Him.
- (3) **Children and Youth**: We will create opportunities to gather groups of children and youth (from pre-K through college) for times of learning and support.
- (4) **Human Care & Community Partnerships**: We will look for opportunities to fill the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the people in community. We will look for opportunities to partner with other groups in the community to build relationships.
- (5) **Prayer**: We will be prayer warriors on behalf of our members and our community.
- (6) **Communication**: We will use multiple means of communication to keep members and friends of the Rock informed of current events.
- (7) **Mission Beyond Borders**: We will offer opportunities to connect with and support missionaries and mission work that reaches beyond our immediate area.
- (8) **Resources**: We will be good stewards of the facilities God has provided. We will teach and encourage members and friends of the Rock to be good stewards of their resources and to join in the joy of supporting the work of His Kingdom.

ACTION STEPS

We wish always to be open to the Spirit's leading and to be flexible in our planning. We believe the following action steps will help us serve our community:

(1) **Worship:**

- (a) Complete installation and implementation of live-stream worship capabilities.
- (b) Improve stage area lighting (8 LED lights).
- (c) Install video monitor(s) in café and Rocker room.
- (d) Message Time:
 - 1. More intentionality in keeping length to no more than 20 minutes
 - 2. Continue to incorporate ideas/leaders to engage/include children
 - 3. Ensure that one or two main points are clearly stated and reinforced
 - 4. Maintain success in the following areas: relevance to daily life; teaching Bible and encouraging study; main point sticks with worshiper; participation in worship; and ease/comfort inviting others.
- (e) Implement "service project" ideas for a worship time or times
- (f) Implement "sending" ideas to support those doing other things in the community on Sunday mornings (sports, work, etc.)
- (g) Make overall worship time friendly for families with children with frequent children's messages and other kinds of participation during worship time and by encouraging the normal length of worship time to be approximately 1 hour.
- (h) Provide regular greeters at the front door and have a designated information person available in the Café for questions each Sunday
- (i) Complete guidelines for weddings and wedding coordinators.
- (j) Review and implement plans for emergency events during worship (fire, tornado, security concerns).
- (k) Review and implement plans for operations during a pandemic or other long-term adverse event.

Staff/Volunteer Needs: Help with media (graphic design interns); Help to run mediashout, sound board, cameras, live stream; Help with maintaining prayer cards/info cards/information packets; some bakers for occasional variety in treats; help with children's sermons; greeters.

Financial Needs: Funding for LED lights and video monitors.

(2) **Missional Communities:**

- (a) The Ambassadors, the D2MC leader and Pastor will facilitate and maintain at least three missional community groups at the Rock. The missional community groups will meet regularly around common interests (such as bible study, service

areas, neighborhood activities) and share stories of how they have seen Jesus at work and have joined Him.

- (b) The Ambassadors will continue organizing bible study opportunities for those wishing to form into groups for deeper study.
- (c) The Ambassadors will continue planning for how missional communities can assist in serving at the Rock and in the community.
- (d) We will plan and implement a few events to increase the visibility of the Rock and to make connections in the community. Monday Night Football at Sparetime will continue. Other events could include block parties, food trucks, Rock the Block, 4th of July event, Rocktober or other events we haven't considered.

Staffing/Volunteer Needs: Leaders for missional community groups; a planning team to propose and organize event.

Financial Needs: Funding for D2MC training

(3) Children & Youth:

- (a) Continue Stepping Stones (pre-K to 4th grade) and Faith Inkubators (5th to 8th grade) on Wednesday evenings. Stepping Stones will provide an opportunity for children to learn about the Bible in a fun and safe environment. Faith Inkubators will provide an opportunity for deeper study leading to confirmation. Service activities will increase connection with the community for both groups.
- (b) Recruit and support a strong and passionate leader or leadership team, for the high school youth, to boldly go in the direction God leads them, including reevaluating the current way we utilize the Godparents program, and how best to energize high school youth for Jesus. Consider how young adults may be involved and engaged.
- (c) Further develop communication coordination and cooperation between all of the children and youth ministry areas, by recruiting a strong and passionate communication expert, or team of experts. This includes communication between leaders and directors, leaders and parents, leaders and other leaders, Faith Ink, Godparents, Stepping Stones, and Children and Youth Ministry at The ROCK and the Seward community. We want to utilize all communication channels, especially social media.
- (d) Encourage, support, publicize, organize, and simplify ministry tasks so that more adults and children would be equipped to work and would then become actively involved in furthering God's work with children at The Rock.

Staff/Volunteer Needs: Leaders to pursue the goals in (b), (c) and (d) above.

Financial Needs: Curriculum for Stepping Stones and Faith Ink - \$1,000

(4) Human Care & Community Partnerships:

- (a) Continue development of comfort dog program in cooperation with Lutheran Church Charities. The Comfort Dog gives us a front row seat to watch the Spirit work through a dog to provide peace and comfort and opportunities to connect.
- (b) Continue to collect food for the Blue Valley Pantry.
- (c) Explore the possibility of establishing a “mercy center” in connection with partner churches to support the working poor in Seward County.

Staff/Volunteer Needs: To be determined

Financial Needs: To be determined

(5) Prayer: We will regularly seek guidance from the Lord in prayer and will adjust our plans based on His guidance and will use prayer to minister to our community:

- (a) The Ladies Prayer Group will continue to pray regularly for the Rock and for prayer requests received.
- (b) Leaders will set aside time for prayer as part of each meeting.
- (c) The Ambassadors will coordinate prayer walks through missional communities or other groups.

Staff/Volunteer Needs: To be determined

Financial Needs: To be determined

(6) Communication: We will seek to improve communication in the following ways:

- (a) Implementation of Servant Keeper and Ministry Schedule Pro software. Complete collection of information and pictures.
- (b) Continue weekly updates with news and events and coordinate them across various platforms (email/servant keeper; facebook, web site).
- (c) Run announcements on video screens in fellowship area.
- (d) Coordinate communication for children and youth.
- (e) Consistently update web site.
- (f) Include visitor information/video and/or video tour on the web site (e.g. “What to expect at the Rock”).

Staff/Volunteer Needs: To be determined

Financial Needs: \$640 annual for software licenses; balance to be determined

(7) Mission Beyond Borders: We will offer opportunities to connect with and support missionaries and mission work that reaches beyond our immediate area in the following ways:

- (a) Offer opportunities for missionaries to visit the Rock and share the work that God is doing and how we can help support it.
- (b) Continue to develop partnership with Concordia University on Guatemala short term mission trips and offer opportunities for participation.
- (c) Continue to develop relationships with Mission Central and Mission of Christ Network.
- (d) Explore ways we can partner with and support Camp Luther.

Staff/Volunteer Needs: To be determined

Financial Needs: To be determined

(9) Resources: We will raise funds and maintain our facilities in the following ways:

- (a) Maintain and increase regular giving to general fund in accordance with budget.
- (b) Conduct a campaign beginning in Fall 2020 to increase stewardship awareness and increase giving. Confirm (through Servant Keeper or otherwise) an accurate list of regular attenders/supporters of the Rock.
- (c) Provide opportunities for personal financial training (Joel Endorf)
- (d) Promote online giving to improve consistency/predictability of giving.
- (e) Identify a person to serve as a part-time administrative assistant.
- (f) Identify a person or persons to serve as events coordinator for facilities usage and a person or persons to coordinate logistics for funerals.
- (g) Continue cleanup of lower-level rooms.
- (h) Continue maintenance and improvement of exterior landscaping.
- (i) Complete the following maintenance/improvement items as funds are available:
 - Tuck Pointing for exterior brick
 - Additional parking lot lighting
 - Fans for worship space
 - Storage shed for outdoor storage
 - Freezer for Kitchen
 - Defibrillator
 - Replacement of east doors

Staff/Volunteer Needs: Volunteers to help with tasks above

Financial Needs: To be determined

Doing all these things sounds overwhelming. Fortunately, we have a God with unlimited resources. He will provide whatever we need to do His will for the Rock. So, the first thing we need to do is turn all this over to Him in prayer and spend time reviewing what His Word says to us. Once we have done that, the rest is easy. We each serve as God has gifted us and we let Him worry about how it all fits together and works out in the end.